

"To be honest, if they had made more of an effort to involve me and give me some responsibility, I probably would still be involved. They only expected me to attend the meetings and I couldn't do that."

Business Person

"They need to find a way to recruit more parents and let them know their opinion is really looked at- not going in one ear and out the other. Parents have had this experience and it turns them off."

Parent

"There is a need to really analyze the benefits for business involvement in Smart Start, package that, and design a PR effort specifically targeted at business. When business sees the practical connections and direct payoffs, they may be more likely and willing to become involved."

Business Person

■ Some parents and business representatives reported minimal efforts to involve them.

Despite the efforts reported by executive directors, parents in 33% of the partnerships and business people in 40% of the partnerships stated that very few or no extra efforts had been made to encourage or support their participation.

■ Parents suggested increased numbers, community outreach, and improved attitudes regarding parent participation were essential to fully involve parents.

While parents agreed that the predominant parent involvement efforts (i.e., evening meetings and child care) are imperative, they contended that logistical support is not enough to ensure meaningful involvement. Creating a critical mass of parents by adding board positions and/or establishing a parent group, increasing communication and dialogue with more parents in the community, and giving parents greater attention and respect were considered top priorities among the parents interviewed.

■ Business people recommended public awareness, education, and more clearly and broadly defined roles were necessary to fully involve business.

In contrast to many partnerships' current business involvement efforts (i.e., appointments to leadership roles and solicitation of funds), business people emphasized the importance of increasing public awareness of Smart Start. They asserted that businesses must be educated about how Smart Start affects them and the benefits of their involvement. Business people also stressed the need to define more clearly the roles business can play in the partnership and they underscored the importance of expanding those roles beyond that of a financial backer.